TL 3049-H

Message from Salemba Prison, Jakarta

To Carmel Budiardjo and the participants at the NGOs' Meeting in Bangkok,
27 - 29 February 1996

Dear Carmel and friends,

I salute your meeting. An ASEAN/Europe Summit should not be limited to a meeting between governments. It is also extremely important to have a meeting between people and people because we want a world of peace, a world free of violence a world without suppression.

We 'four brothers' here in Salemba Prison, Jakarta, are determined to keep on fighting for freedom of the press, freedom of expression, and the freedom to organise.

The Indonesian Government continues to exert pressure on the Indonesian people, including the press and journalists, so as to conceal its own evil practices and its persistent violations of human rights. As a result, there is no freedom of the press, no freedom of expression and the government is able to monopolise the flow of information and control public opinion.

The Indonesian government is violating the rule of law everywhere in the land, in Java, in Aceh/Sumatra, in West Irian, in Maluku, and in East Timor. Because the press is prevented from exposing all this oppression, it is not possible for the Indonesian people to understand the terrible things done by the Indonesian government and to work for change . The government, backed by the army, uses intimidation, terror and violence to maintain its control over creative freedom.

With regard to East Timor, the vast majority of Indonesians know nothing about what the Indonesian government and the army are doing in East Timor and against the East Timorese people. This is because most journalists have been prevented, by means of intimidation, from reporting about the true situation in East Timor. This situation still persists to this very day.

The Indonesian government has been furiously lobbying the governments of the European Union not to discuss East Timor during the forthcoming Summit in Bangkok. This only proves that it has a great deal to hide about what goes on in the occupied country of East Timor, a country that has been robbed of its independence.

Jose Ramos Horta has been prohibited from visiting Thailand and there are attempts to prevent others from talking about East Timor. This is a grave interference in the sovereignty and independence of those countries, a disgraceful kind of diplomacy.

We journalists, as Indonesians, are deeply ashamed of such actions by the Indonesian government. We want a world of peace, freedom and independence. As Indonesians we support the struggle of other people and nations for self-determination. The Indonesian Constitution supports the right of peoples to independence.

We journalists support independence for the people of East Timor and we fervently hope that they will soon be released from the perpetual fear and intimidation which they suffer at the hands of the military and the Indonesian government.

Best wishes,

Ahmad Taufik,
18 February, 1996
Salemba Prison, Jalan Percetakan Negara 88,
Central Jakarta, Indonesia.